Iowa Empowerment Board

History and Development:
* Established in 1998 by legislation.

* Impetus for the Board was the public and bureaucratic demand to support children before they enter school.

* Mandated to build coordination and local decision making around issues relating to young children as well as building partnerships and collaboration between local and state entities.

Membership:
* 22 members include citizens, state department directors and legislators:

    - Citizens: 16 members appointed by the Governor;

    - 6 directors from the departments of Economic Development, Education, Human Rights, Human Services, Public Health, and Workforce Development;

    - 6 legislators appointed by each party caucus serve as ex-officio members.

* Empowerment Board is mandated to meet quarterly but choose to meet every other month:

    - Two of these meetings occur at a local site.

* Chair: Citizen member elected by the voting members of the Board.

    - Recent changes mandate the Vice Chair to be the successor to the Chair.

Advisory and Work Groups:
* Legislation authorizes that the board can select advisory groups as necessary.

* Board established Early Childhood Iowa as advisory group:

    - Members consists of public, private, and nonprofit sectors.

    - Advises the state board on system wide issues and recommendations for implementing a comprehensive approach.

* Local decision making boards are secondary advisory groups.

    - Convene quarterly meetings with coordinators of the local boards and provide informal recommendations on the work of the state Board.

* Ad hoc groups are established on an as needed basis.

Administrative Home:
* The board is administratively located in the Department of Management.

Staffing:
* Maintains 3 staff positions, which include a facilitator, a community liaison and family support coordinator.

* Additional staff are provided through the departments that serve on the Iowa Empowerment Board.

Results Framework:
* The result areas written into the authorizing legislation:

    - Healthy Children, Children Ready to Succeed in School, Safe and Supportive Communities, Secure and Nurturing Child Care Environments and Secure and Nurturing Families.

* Indicators developed around result areas and tracked externally.

Initiatives:
* Expanding evidence based practices in the Family Support Programs.

* Technical assistance to providers and local boards on funding decisions.

* Expanding low-income families' access to pre-school.

Strategies:
Aligning Policies and Programs
* Aligning early childhood and youth development work at the state agency level.

Improving Systems and Services
* Early Childhood Iowa works with local communities to coordinate in a better fashion and deliver services to children and families more effectively.

Engaging Youth and Communities
* Every county in Iowa has a local structure that works with the Empowerment Board.

- 51 percent of the board membership is mandated to be comprised of citizens/ elected officials.

- Funding control at the local level allows communities to focus on priority issues they identify.

Building Demand/Public Support
- The State Boards direction to the local counties ensures that they achieve the success needed to garner public support.

Funding:
- Community Empowerment's annual operational cost is $400,000, which covers 3 staff positions and the work of the State Board.

- The Board's annual grant making capacity for local communities totals is $48 million.

- Allocates $2 million annually for professional development.

Local Connections:
- Connect with local decision making boards as well as providers around training (e.g., United Way).

- Matching funds coming from foundations to support local Empowerment funds.

Accomplishments:
- Increased public awareness in Iowa about the importance of the early years (0-5).

- Increasing state and local government support for children and families.

- Developing a data system that tracks families who participate in Family Support Programs.

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